

**Unravelling the mysterious world of the appearance of
spurious books:**

**A look into the two controversial works attributed to
Uthman Ibn Saeed Al Darimi (d.280AH) - Naqd/Refutation
of Bishr Marisi and Radd/Response to the Jahmites, and
their origins:**

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Key Summary:

- The two books attributed to al-Darimi were never mentioned in any extant works before Ibn Taymiyya's time.
- The only named copyist of the manuscripts (which are dated in the 8th century AH) was an obscure mysterious scribe of Ibn Taymiyya called Ayoub Ibn Sakhr Al-Amiri.
- The Naqd's focal narrator is Abu al-Khayr (d.568AH) who was a notorious ijazah fraudster.
- All hearings and asanid from the manuscripts, and the chains of scholars for both books, all end up going back to the one focal point narrator for each book, either directly or indirectly (by way of ijaza).
- These focal point narrators of both works narrate them from unknowns (in Abu al-Khayr's case he goes via Abu Nasr al-Ghazi but the latter warned people not to trust the former's transmissions).
- The date of origin of the circulation of these two works dates around 500AH onwards (Abu al-Khair, the focal narrator of the Naqd was born at this time and Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq, the focal narrator of the Radd, was born 470AH).

-The location of origin of the circulation of these two works seems to be Herat (Harawi's) and transmitted to Isfahan in the above time period (around 500AH onwards).

(1) Introduction

Ever wondered where the likes of Ibn Taymiyya got the books such as Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi and Radd/Response to the Jahmites attributed to al-Darimi from?

How no one mentioned them for centuries since the supposed authors time, until we find in the 7th and 8th century AH works of the razor sharp Ibn Taymiyya citing these books and quoting them against his adversaries like arrows from a bow.

We delve into the waters that are the sources of Ibn Taymiyya's (and others) transmission.

A story of ijazah fraudsters who tricked scholars with their licences, warnings about them yet even the best were seduced by them, and mysterious transmitters and copyists.

Sounds like a plot for a fictional drama right?

Rather this is 6th century AH Isfahan, a place and setting of the bustling hadith scholarship and their much sought after ijazahs (permissions of licence to narrate and transmit).

These chains of transmission ran through the following centuries to giants in the scholarship field:

Ibn Taymiyya (d.728AH), Dhahabi (d.748AH), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d.852AH), etc.

(2) Investigating the manuscripts, hearings, readings, and asanid (chains) of the two works attributed to al-Darimi—Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi and Radd/Response to the Jahmites:

The two books were packaged together by the copyists and hence their manuscripts come together from the same sources. The earliest copies of the manuscripts are dated to the 8th century AH, specifically from 711AH onwards.

(2.1) The Copyists:

Where the manuscripts mention the name of the copyist (earliest dating to 711AH), he is named as Ayoub Ibn Sakhr Al-Amiri.

Many people will not have heard of this person.

He is the scribe/copyist of a number of Ibn Taymiyya's works and letters, including his works 'Al-Radd ala al-Shadhili' and 'Al-Hamawiyyah al-Kubra'.

He was possibly one of Ibn Taymiyya's students or followers, however he was not well known.

There is no biographical entry for him, not even from those closest to Ibn Taymiyyah and his students, such as al-Barzali, al-Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Abd al-Hadi, al-Safadi, Ibn Shakir, al-Maqrizi, and others.

(2.2) The chains of the manuscripts and hearings/readings/asanid of the book Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi:

There is only one chain in the manuscripts:

Abu Sa'id Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Ahnaf, informed us. He said: Ishaq Ibn Abi Ishaq al-Qarabi, the hadith master, informed us. He said: Abu Bakr Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-Fadl Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Husayn al-Muzakki informed us. He said: Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Sarram informed us. He said: Uthman Ibn Sa'id al-Darimi narrated to us.

Abu Sa'id Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Ahnaf is completely unknown and he is not found anywhere outside this chain.

The one he is said to narrate it from, Ishaq Ibn Abi Ishaq al-Qarabi, died in 429AH. So Ibn al-Ahnaf's alleged hearing from him would have been around then or before.

There are a number of hearings/readings recorded in the manuscript.

They include the hearing/reading of the likes of Ibn Taymiyya and all of the connected chains go back to a certain Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Musa al-Isfahani.

He is actually Abu Al-Khair Abdul-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa.

The muhaqqiq of one of the editions is Rashid Ibn Hasan al-Alma'i (Al-Rashd Library for Publishing and Distribution).

He makes the mistake of saying Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Musa al-Isfahani is quote "Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hamawiyyah al-Isbahani, a righteous man who resided in Hamadhan, narrated al-Mu'jam of al-Tabarani through attendance from 'Abd al-Samad al-'Anbari, from Ibn Rizah. He died in the year 601 AH."

This is an error by the muhaqqiq. As we will see from the likes of Ibn Hajar's sanad to the book that it is actually Abu Al-Khair Abdul-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa (d.568AH)

In fact the muhaqqiq himself mentions in hearing's of the book that it's an Abu Al-Khair. (see 1/111 of his edition).

As for Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hamawiyah al-Isbahani, he is not Abu Al-Khair, but rather he is Abu Ismail.

[See Dhahabi's 'Tarikh Islam' 13/38 Bashar Edition]

All direct connected hearings of the book mentioned in the manuscript go through Abu Al-Khair Abdul-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa, from Abu Nasr Ahmad Ibn Umar Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazi (famous and trustworthy), from the unknown Abu Saeed Abdul-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Ahnaf, who we mentioned earlier as the first person in the chain of the manuscripts.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani has a chain for this book Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi attributed to al-Darimi:

“Abu Hurayrah Ibn al-Dhahabi informed us by ijazah. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Muhsin al-Duwalibi informed us in his book, from his hearing from Ajibah bint Abi Bakr, by her ijazah from Abu al-Khayr Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad ibn Musa.

He informed us: Abu Nasr Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Muhammad al-Ghazi. He informed us: Abu Said Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Ahnaf. He informed us: Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim

al-Qarrab. He informed us: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abi al-Fadl al-Muzakki al-Harawi. He informed us: Muhammad ibn Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim Ibn al-Sarram. He narrated to us: Uthman ibn Said (al-Darimi) narrated to us”

[Ibn Hajar’s ‘Al-Mujam al-Mufahras aw Tajrid Asanid al-Kutub al-Mashhurah wa al-Ajza al-Manthurah’ p.55 Al-Risala Foundation - Beirut]

We see Ibn Hajar’s chain, just like all the direct connected hearings of the manuscript including Ibn Taymiyya’s hearing, goes back to this Abu Al-Khair Abdul-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa.

Let’s now have a look at his biography and his status.

Ironically, Ibn Hajar himself mentions from Ibn al-Najjar (d.643) that he said:

“I saw a document in Isfahan that had been written concerning Abu al-Khayr Ibn Musa.

In it, the scholars of the time were asked to write what they knew of his condition.

I saw in it the handwriting of Isma'il al-Taymi (known as Qawwam al-Sunnah), Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, Abu Bakr al-Laftuwani, Abu Mas'ud Kutah, and a group of imams from their generation.

They all testified that Abu al-Khayr is not reliable in transmission, should not be narrated from, and cannot be depended upon.”

[Ibn Hajar’s ‘Lisan al-Mizan’ 5/164 Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah - Beirut Edition]

This report is also found in the works of various other scholars who quoted from Ibn al-Najjar's famous book 'Dhayl Tarikh Baghdad', which is his extension to al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's 'Tarikh Baghdad'.

Ibn al-Najjar's book only reached us in parts in the present day. However the likes of Dhahabi quote from it frequently to give us information from the original version they had.

Indeed Dhahabi says:

"Ibn al-Najjar said:

'Our Shaykh Abu Abdullah al-Hanbali in Isfahan sent me a document concerning Abu al-Khayr, which includes the handwriting of Isma'il ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Fadl, Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, Muhammad Ibn Abi Nasr al-Laftuwani, and Kutah alayhi.

All of them testified that his transmission is not to be relied upon, his word is not accepted, and he is not trustworthy in his religious commitment and bad conduct.

...I read in a volume in the handwriting of Ubaid Allah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Latif al-Khujandi a question that the Hafiz Abu Musa al-Madini asked about the ijazahs of the Baghdadis for Mas'ud Ibn al-Hasan al-Thaqafi, who are Ibn al-Ma'mun, Abu al-Husayn ibn al-Muhtadi billah, Abu Bakr al-Khatib, Ibn al-Naqur, and the complete group of ten whom Abd al-Rahim Ibn Musa transmitted.

He referred to places I sought but did not find.

People spoke about this matter, and he was also asked about (Abu al-Khayr's) ijazahs of Ibn Hajar (an earlier figure and not one of the two famous Ibn Hajar's).

Abu Musa wrote the answer:

‘The innocents were deceived by these ijazahs and wasted their time reading them, while the claimant procrastinated in presenting them until their falsehood became clear after a long time. Returning to the truth is better. Whoever read with the ijazah of these people on the chief has lost his effort, failed in his hope, and his work is nullified. The chief himself testified to the falsehood of some of them.’”

[Dhahabi’s ‘Siyar A'lam al-Nubala’ 20/574 Al-Risala Edition]

[Ibn al-Najjar praised al-Khujandi as “excellent jurist and a complete man of letters. He heard many hadiths, pursued knowledge himself, and wrote in his own hand.”

See: Ibn al-Najjar’s ‘Dhayl Tarikh Baghdad’ 17/92 Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah - Beirut Edition]

As we can see all hearings of the manuscript, including Ibn Taymiyya’s hearing, as well as Ibn Hajar’s own chain, all go back to Abu al-Khayr Abd al-Rahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa, and in turn his hearing goes back to shaykh’s who wrote in writing that he is not to be trusted or relied upon in his transmission!!!

We can also see that scholars were duped into transmitting Abu al-Khayr’s fake ijazahs and he was exposed for this. When he was asked to present them, he dithered and didn’t come back with anything.

His ijazah’s were deemed worthless.

This is important as we will see that there are indirect hearings and readings of the manuscripts of Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi and Radd/Response to the Jahmites, as well as in the chains of narration found in some of Dhahabi’s writings.

These give the impression that they are alternative chains through a route other than Abu al-Khayr.

However we will see that all of them have indirect hearing and they are missing the name of the intermediary whom they heard it from directly and who gave them ijazah.

All evidence points to this intermediary being Abu al-Khayr the infamous ijazah fraudster!

The manuscript has a bunch of readings of Abu al-Khayr, including from Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr al-Laftawani, from Abu Tahir Hamzah Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Husayn al-Rudhrawari al-Sufi, in the presence of the unknown Abu Saad Ibn al-Ahnaf.

Yet Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr al-Laftawani, along with Ismail al-Taymi and Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, warned the people against taking Abu al-Khayr's transmissions!

So again it seems with we have Abu al-Khayr transmitting the book from another sheikh who warned the people against Abu al-Khayr's transmissions!

Another of Abu al-Khayr's readings mentioned in the manuscript is:

“And he heard the entire book from the eminent shaykh, the leader of the imams, Abu Nasr Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abi Bakr al-Nasihi, from Abu Sa'id Ibn al-Ahnaf, with the reading of Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sahl al-Isfahani al-Sharabi.

His nephew, Abu al-Fadl Hibat Allah, and others were present in the year 516 AH, and again in the year 520 AH. The hearing is in the handwriting of al-Ghazi.” (p.118).

Here Abu al-Khayr claims one of his hearings of the book was written down by Abu Nasr al-Ghazi.

However this same shaikh warned people not to trust Abu al-Khayr's transmissions.

Also when people asked for proof of ijazah documentation from Abu al-Khayr, he failed to provide it, as we mentioned earlier.

It should be note here that the person mentioned above who is Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sahl al-Isfahani al-Sharabi, is actually the narrator/transmitter of the other book attributed to al-Darimi too, that is the Radd/Response to the Jahmites.

We will touch on that later in the section on that book.

(2.3) Analysis of all other the chains in the hearings from the manuscript that don't mention Abu al-Khayr:

The manuscript has a few readings with chains that don't mention Abu al-Khayr.

The first is:

Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn al-Izz Ahmad Ibn Abd al-Hamid Ibn Abd al-Hadi from Ali Ibn Ahmad al-Bukhari by his ijazah from Abu Saad Abd Allah Ibn Umar al-Saffar, from Abu Nasr al-Ghazi through ijazah.

[see 1/110 of al-Alma'i's edition]

This tells us that al-Saffar didn't hear it directly from Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, but rather through an intermediary who gave him ijazah.

It actually states: "and al-Saffar said it was by ijazah".

As we know, Abu al-Khayr was giving out ijazahs from Abu Nasr al-Ghazi.

Hence it's most likely he is the missing intermediary here, or else we have a unknown intermediary and the chain becomes disconnected.

It also mentions the reading through al-Safa's (Saffar) ijazah also from Abu Nasr Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ja'far al-Nasihi based on his hearing from Ibn al-Ahnaf. (p.111).

In this chain we have al-Safa (who is presumably al-Saffar) who again narrates through an unnamed intermediary (as it says by ijazah, it may or may not be from Abu al-Khayr), from an unknown person named Abu Nasr Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ja'far al-Nasihi, and he from the unknown Ibn al-Ahnaf who is the manuscript narrator we mentioned earlier.

Another reading in the manuscript has Ibn Taymiyya's chain from Abu Hafs Umar Ibn Abd al-Munim Ibn Umar al-Qawwas, through ijazah from Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Samad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-Fadl al-Haristani, through ijazah from Abu Nasr Ahmad Ibn Umar Ibn Muhammad al-Isfahani al-Ghazi, from the unknown Ibn al-Ahnaf. (p.114).

So once again we have someone (al-Haristani) who didn't narrate it directly from Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, but rather via ijaza.

As mentioned, Abu al-Khayr was notoriously giving out the ijaza's of Abu Nasr al-Ghazi.

Abu al-Khayr is most likely the missing intermediary here or else we have unknown intermediary.

(2.4) Dhahabi's chains back to the Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi:

We will keep it short in this point.

All Dhahabi's chains where he mentions or quotes from the book go through the two narrators already mentioned:

Abu Saad Abd Allah Ibn Umar al-Saffar and Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Samad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-Fadl al-Haristani and both of them from Abu Nasr al-Ghazi.

We've already discussed their narration/transmission from him is not direct, but rather with ijazah from an intermediary who is most likely Abu al-Khayr (otherwise if it's not him, then it's an unknown).

Indeed we find in all the places where Dhahabi narrates it back to al-Saffar and al-Haristani, they mention عن (on the authority of) Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, hence their hearing isn't direct but rather through an intermediary.

To sum up the various transmission and chains for the book Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi, they all end up going through the unreliable narrator Abu al-khayr, either directly or indirectly through ijazahs.

The presence of hearings from scholars like Ibn Taymiyya, etc does not change the fact that ultimately the source is somebody

who the prominent sheikhs like Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, Ismail al-Taymi (Qiwam al-Sunnah), etc all warned the people about to not accept his transmissions.

Even if we ignore Abu al-Khayr and overlook him, his transmission always goes through Abu Nasr al-Ghazi, and from him to the unknown Ibn al-Ahnaf. So even then we hit a dead end.

Abu al-Khayr was born 500AH and died 568AH. This places the unknown Ibn al-Ahnaf's supposed narration around 450-500AH approximately.

This concludes our study on the book and we now move on to the other book that is attributed to al-Darimi: Radd/Response to the Jahmites.

(3) The book 'Radd/Response to the Jahmites':

As mentioned already, the two books were packaged together by the copyists and hence their manuscripts come together from the same sources.

The earliest copies of the manuscripts are dated to the 8th century AH, specifically from 711AH onwards.

The copyist has already been discussed.

There are no hearings/readings mentioned for this book.

The editor Abu 'Asim al-Shawami al-Athari (The Islamic Library, Cairo Edition) mentions there are readings including from Ibn Taymiyya (p.8).

However this is an error and the editor simply repeated his own words to what he mentioned about the readings for the other book (Naqd/Refutation of Bishr Marisi). He seems to copy paste his words into his introduction for the book ‘Radd/Response to the Jahmites’.

The hearings mentioned in the manuscript are not for this book (Radd), but rather the other book (Naqd) packaged with it.

(3.1) The manuscript chain for ‘Radd/Response to the Jahmites’:

“We were informed by Abu al-Makarem Abd al-Azim Ibn Abd al-Latif Ibn Abi Nasr al-Sharabi al-Isfahani in his written correspondence to us. He said: The learned woman Umm al-Subh, Dauw al-Nisa bint Abi al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sahl al-Sharabi, informed us, through my reading to her in Rabi al-Thani of the year 567 AH.

She said: My father, the Imam Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq, informed us by recitation to him in our home in Isfahan, in Safar of the year 529 AH.

He said: The eminent preacher, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mudhakkir al-Harawi, residing in Sa‘ (a village among the villages of Herat), narrated to us in what I read to him there from the original of his hearing, in the handwriting of the hadith scholar Abu al-Fath Ibn Samkuyah.

I said to him: The jurist, Abu Ruh Thabit Ibn Muhammad al-Azdi al-Sa‘di, informed you in the months of the year 456 AH. He said: My father, Abu Muhammad, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Fadl, informed us. He said: Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Qurashi narrated to us that the Imam Abu Sa‘id Uthman Ibn Sa‘id told them...”

The narrator Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mudhakkir al-Harawi is completely unknown. Wherever his name is mentioned in the biographies by Dhahabi, there is no information other than his connection to the chain of this book.

This presents us with a problem because Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq, says he heard it from Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mudhakkir al-Harawi and the original of his hearing from Abu Ruh Thabit Ibn Muhammad al-Azdi al-Sa'di in 456 AH.

It is said Abu al-Fath Ibn Samkuyah (who would have been present) recorded it (by writing it down) the hearing of al-Harawi from Abu Ruh.

Very little is known about Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq and he was not known as a verifying scholar of any degree.

This raises questions about the reliability of the copy being in Ibn Samkuyah's handwriting.

Especially considering that the one who presents this to Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq is a certain Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mudhakkir al-Harawi, who is completely unknown outside of this chain.

All chains I found from Ibn Hajar and Dhahabi all go through the same chain as the manuscript chain.

Hence they have the same unknown narrator Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah Ibn Muhammad al-Mudhakkir al-Harawi.

His supposed narration took place 456AH.

(4) Conclusion:

We find that the two books attributed to al-Darimi were never mentioned in any extant works before Ibn Taymiyya's time. The actual origin of the circulation of these works dates around 500AH onwards (Abu al-Khair focal the narrator of the Naqd was born at this time and Abu al-Fath Abd al-Razzaq the focal narrator of the Radd was born 470AH).

These focal point narrators of both works narrate them from unknowns (in Abu al-Khayr's case he goes via Abu Nasr al-Ghazi but the latter warned people not to trust the former's transmissions).

All hearings and asanid from the manuscripts and the chains of scholars, all end up going back to these focal point narrators either directly or indirectly (by way of ijazah).